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EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Richmond Conferences

Between the 7th and 12th of December, Richmond, Virginia, entertained the delegates to two national conventions. The first was that of the National Vocational Guidance Association and the second the annual convention of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education. Of the first conference little need be said except to record that it bore evidence of an ever-increasing interest in the movement to make vocational guidance, in all of its different phases, an integral part of the public-school system. The employment of vocational counselors, the gathering and distribution of vocational information, the establishment of placement bureaus, and the exercising of employment supervision were all discussed and approved. There can be no doubt that the movement is gaining in definiteness and consequently in general support.

The eighth annual convention of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education was unique in the meetings of this society. In the first place, it was more nearly "national" than ever before both in the delegates attending and in the speakers on the program, eleven states and the District of Columbia being represented by the latter.

In the second place, the entire program was based upon an extensive survey which had been in progress in Richmond during the eight months preceding the conference.

In the third place, the deliberations brought to the surface nothing but the most harmonious opinions, regarding industrial education, from representatives of corporations, organized labor, and educational authorities, and from legislators and social workers.

And finally, the conference revealed the growing influence of the National Society and also indicated the general lines along which this influence is to be exerted.

The Richmond "Survey" was made, at the request of the city of Richmond, under the direction of the National Society. The Society had the assistance, however, of many important organizations, among them being the United States Bureau of Education, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Russell Sage Foundation, besides the following local bodies: the Board of Education, Board of Trustees of the Virginia Mechanics Institute, Business Men's Club, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Central Trades and Labor Council, Metal Trades Council, and a number of employers' associations.

The total cost of the survey is estimated at from $15,000 to $20,000. Of this the amount of $10,000 was subscribed locally for the expenses of the survey and of the convention, and the remainder was borne by the Russell Sage Foundation, which made the school survey, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which bureau gave the services of its expert, Mr. Winslow, and will print the final report.

The amount and nature of the co-operation indicated by these statements are highly suggestive and need no further comment.

The school survey was made under the direction of Dr. Leonard P. Ayres. The work contemplated the examination of such facts only as related specifically to education and to industrial employment. It consisted in the examination, tabulation, and interpretation of statistics already available, and the collection of certain information about the employment of the older brothers and sisters of the thirteen- and fourteen-year-old school children. This information was secured by means of questionnaires, submitted to the children in question, and relating to the kinds and conditions of labor in which these brothers and sisters were engaged and to the progressiveness or non-progressiveness of wages.

The school survey revealed the fact that Richmond, a wealthy city, was doing far less than most cities of her class for education in general, and little or nothing for the children who would profit most by industrial education. It showed that, while a well-enforced child-labor law kept children out of the factories and many other places of employment until sixteen, a very small fraction of these children remained in school after reaching twelve years of age. It showed clearly that the kind of education most urgently needed was of a prevocational nature.

The industrial survey was a more elaborate affair, though it is to be doubted whether it will be more productive of good than the school survey. Its purpose was to make careful analyses of several industries to ascertain all pertinent facts relating to the conditions of labor under which the industrial wage-workers of Richmond were employed. Among other facts sought were age distribution of apprentices, amount and cause of loss of time, extent of part-time employment, age of entry upon wage-earning occupations, relation of years of experience to wages, extent to which workers receive proper training in the shop while learning the trade, misfits in present positions, conditions causing strain or impairing health, and lack of *general school training* of present workers. This part of the survey also attempted the minute analysis of the processes of manufacture in several important industries.

A preliminary report says:

> Eight months' time was given to the survey, which was directed by Mr. Charles H. Winslow and a corps of twenty workers, of whom seventeen were men and three were women. In addition there was an office force of five clerks and stenographers. The field work required six months, during which time at least six people were continuously employed. All the agents were regularly employed, no volunteer help being utilized in this portion of the survey.

It would be well within the facts to say that this industrial survey was made with the full co-operation of organized labor, a most important consideration. Mr. Winslow is a recognized champion of organized labor as well as an expert on industrial education. In one of the most notable addresses of the convention, Mr. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, said that, for the first time, a sufficient basis in industrial facts had been established to support a practical plan of industrial training. There can be no doubt that he intended his address to be construed as an authoritative indorsement of the whole Richmond program. This fact alone may be worth to the cause of industrial education all that the survey cost, and it will make it much easier to secure the indorsement of local unions to any plan which follows the Richmond scheme.

This scheme, which, it must be remembered, is supported by all the parties to the survey, includes a much more effective general education, the establishment of prevocational schools, vocational courses in the high schools, and a complete system of day and evening part-time and continuation schools.

In organizing this survey and in bringing together in practical unanimity the employing interests, organized labor, and the school authorities, the National Society has rightfully secured for itself a greatly increased influence, but this increased influence is coincident with a broadening in its own point of view and with the attainment of catholicity in its propaganda. In its pronouncements regarding the introduction of industrial education it has advanced from the position, held five years ago, that such education was a thing apart which needed protection from the narrow-mindedness of the professional educator, and now maintains that all vocational education is a local and not a general question, and, furthermore, is a co-operative matter which should unite all who are genuinely interested in child welfare.

And so the survey must be acknowledged to be a great success. It is not that hitherto unknown or unsuspected facts and conditions have been brought to light by the studies of the several experts. It would have been possible for half a dozen students of the industrial education movement to have foretold all the essential findings after a week's study and conference on the grounds, but the findings now have the moral force of well-nigh unassailable authority and, what is of even greater importance, the testimony of all these experts points inevitably to the logic of the solution recommended by the survey committee and shows that, to be successful, any plan must adequately represent the worker, the employer, and the teacher, and must be adjusted to local conditions of industry and of the present public-school system.

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The Meeting of Section L of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

The meeting of the Education Section during the Christmas holidays at Philadelphia showed a remarkable growth in the scientific study of education since the time this section was founded a few years ago. There was a very large attendance at most of the sessions and the papers which were offered were numerous and in the main of high character. In the three days of the meeting there were 48 papers and two general addresses. Besides the separate meetings of this section there were two joint meetings, one with the American Psychological Association and one with the American Federation of Teachers of the Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

Not only the attendance and the number of papers, but also the character of the papers was of great significance. The majority of the discussions consisted in either reports of scientific investigations or critical discussions of experimentation. Two groups of papers were especially prominent. The one was concerned with the development of tests either of mental ability or of efficiency in some phase of school work. The interest in tests as a means of measuring the product of education as reflected in these meetings is very widespread and intense. This was reflected not merely in the account of new tests, or in the application of tests, but also in certain critical discussions. It becomes apparent that the principles which govern the reliability of such scientific means of measurement become of great importance, as these tests are used by a wider group of people. If tests are used without an appreciation of the errors which are possible, there is danger that an exaggerated opinion of the value of the results will be held. It is therefore appropriate that certain of the papers of the meeting had as their aim the effort to determine the exact reliability of the results obtained by tests.

Another large section of the meeting was concerned with the study and education of exceptional children. Investigations in this field are still concerned mainly with the backward child in spite of the fact which is theoretically recognized that the superior child is of greater importance than the deficient child. The deficient child, however, awakens the greater attention because his failure to adapt himself to the work of the school is the more evident. The superior child finds no difficulty in keeping up with his grade in the school and the fact that he is wasting opportunity because his capacities are not fully made use of does not particularly strike the attention of the teacher or the administrator.

In addition to these general types of papers there were some upon the subject of methods of teaching or concerned with methods of learning in general or in particular subjects of the school.

There would not be space to give even a summary account of the individual papers, but a few may be taken as illustrations of the general classes of papers which have been mentioned. A number of papers dealt with the description of new tests or with the investigation of the reliability of certain tests. Professor Yerkes of Harvard University described a method of the diagnosis of the degree of mental development or of intelligence which he calls the *point scale method*. This is intended as a substitute for the well-known Binet-Simon series of tests. It differs from that series in two main ways. In the first place, an answer to a question is not graded merely as right or wrong, but is given a weight according to the character of the answer. Thus a person may gain one, two, or three points according as his answer is of one kind or another to a particular question. Another point of difference is that the tests are not grouped according to different ages, but a child is put through as many tests as there is any chance of his passing and his total score is found by adding the points which he makes on each individual question. This takes account of the difference in the type of mental life of different children. A child may be able to progress to a high point in one type of tests and be low in his ability in another type. Such difference would not lower his score in the point scale, although it might by the Binet method.

Two other interesting mental tests were described, one of them a picture-arrangement test in which pictures of the type of the "Foxy Grandpa" series are placed out of their order and the child is required to place them in the order which makes a connected story. No words, of course, appear to guide the child in this arrangement. This test was described by Professor Fraser of Cornell. Mr. Trabue of Columbia described the standardization of a sentence completion test. This consists in a series of sentences from each of which one or more words are omitted and are to be supplied by the child. Fifty-six sentences have been put in order according to their difficulty based upon the response of school children to the test.

Considerable interest was manifested in handwriting scales. A paper by Mr. H. T. Manuel indicated the extent to which we may expect reliable results from the use of the Ayres scale when papers are graded by a single judge and the results are to be compared with those obtained by other judges. The same general principles would hold for the Thorndike scale. It appeared from extensive tests that if two persons measured a group of papers by such a scale there would be one chance out of two that they would differ by as much as a step on the Ayres scale. This amount of difference is equal to more than twice the difference between successive school grades. This paper was followed by one by the present writer in which an analytical method for grading handwriting was described; that is, a method according to which five characteristics were judged one at a time with a chart for guidance in grading each characteristic. Professor Thorndike in commenting upon the discussion said that undoubtedly it would be necessary to develop such analytical scales when one desired to do more than make a rough determination of pupils' standing.

A number of papers described the application of tests, as, for example, in the working-out of norms for college Freshmen or in the development of means of measuring the efficiency of children in reading. One paper by Professor B. T. Baldwin reported the application of the Courtis arithmetic tests to college students. Two papers which appeared in the same meeting were of interest because of the contrasting point of view they represented toward school tests in general. The one by Superintendent Bliss of Montclair, New Jersey, expressed a very optimistic attitude toward scientific measurement of educational products. The other, by Professor E. A. Kirkpatrick of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, Normal School, while approving of the tests in general, called attention to the necessity of taking account of their limitation or at least of observing certain principles in their application. He mentioned, for example, the danger of overemphasis by the teacher of the phase of school work which is the subject of test, of the danger of losing sight of the individual child in the attempt to bring up a class average, and of the fact that the measurement of results and the determination of average attainment of pupils in the school do not automatically give us standards which should be set up as ideals of attainment. In order that we may determine what the standard should be, it is necessary to know the social demand for the product of the school. With reference to the need of paying regard to the individual pupil he mentioned the well-known psychological principle that after a certain point in the practice curve has been reached further effort will be wasted. Therefore, if the teacher has in view merely the standard and not the individual progress made by the pupils, a pupil may be kept practicing long after the limits of profit have been exceeded. The chief aim as Professor Kirkpatrick sees it in educational tests is to enlighten both the pupil and the teacher as to the progress which is being made, and this is a very strong point. By the old method neither teacher nor pupil knew definitely what he was striving to attain, nor the extent to which he was succeeding. By means of an objective test both teacher and pupil may become aware of the change which takes place from month to month and of the degree to which the standard's aim is being reached.

An interesting paper by Dr. L. P. Ayres raised the question of the cost of educating the backward child. After presenting figures to show the number of children who repeat grades and the consequent duplication of work and therefore waste of money in carrying the same child through a grade more than once, Dr. Ayres made the point that the significance of these facts is not so much in the money cost of such repeating, as in the fact that the condition shows the need of an entire reorganization of the graded system. Dr. Ayres then showed the amount of overlapping in the abilities of pupils of different grades as exhibited by tests in number, writing, spelling, etc., indicating that many children of the lower grades have ability which is superior to many of those in the higher grades. This condition, he said, cannot be met merely by attempting to prevent repeating, but must be met by some sort of flexible organization which permits the different children to progress through the school at about the same rate of speed, but allows the better endowed to do a much larger amount and higher grade of work than the more poorly endowed children. He expressed the matter by a figure of speech. "We may assume," he said, "that the elementary curriculum is represented by a field of grain to be mowed. All the children, then, should complete a swath from one end of the field to the other, but some children will take a very wide swath and others a very narrow one." How this might be worked out in detail he did not say.

A number of technical papers dealt with the diagnosis of treatment of deficient children. One particularly interesting paper was given by Dr. M. P. E. Groszmann of the National Association for the Study and Education of Exceptional Children. This paper was of interest because it dealt not with the backward child, but with the various kinds of children who were superior or had superior capacities. These children, as Dr. Groszmann showed, require in many cases special treatment in order that their peculiarities or eccentricities may not produce some abnormality in mental development which will impair their usefulness. The children to whom he had reference are not merely those of rapid development, but those in whom there is some exceptional ability in particular directions which is likely to disturb their mental balance. Such children if given proper treatment will exhibit high ability, but if left to themselves may become cranks or even insane.

This report serves merely to suggest some of the more striking subjects which were discussed in the meetings. Many other papers of much interest were given. The high character of the meeting as a whole must be ascribed in large measure to the industry and intelligence in formulating the program and in getting papers which were displayed by the secretary, Mr. A. S. Courtis. The movement for scientific education is clearly growing rapidly and the time is at hand when such gatherings as this will assume the greatest importance to the educational world.

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